



T. Kiefer

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THOMAS M. KIEFER

## PARRANG SABBIL: RITUAL SUICIDE AMONG THE TAUSUG OF JOLO

Among the few native states in insular Southeast Asia that were able to resist European conquest until the end of the nineteenth century, the Sultanate of Sulu is doubly interesting because it was located strategically on an important trade route between the Celebes Sea and the South China Sea. While the Spanish destroyed the fledgling Islamic principality near Manila, their attempts to conquer the stronger Moslem societies in Mindanao and Sulu were frustrated at every turn, and were an enormous drain on the royal treasury. While they were in control of the main town of Sulu between 1635 and 1646, they were unable to hold it, and settled for a treaty with the sultan instead, withdrawing to the newly established garrison at Zamboanga. For the next two hundred and fifty years the Spanish and the Sulus, or *Tausug* as they call themselves, were engaged in almost continuous warfare, which ended only when the Spanish left the Philippines in 1899.

This history of continuous warfare had a formative effect on religious development in the area. While Islam had probably begun to penetrate the Sulu several hundred years before the Spanish arrived, much of the process of gradual Islamization was played out against the background of this war. Faced with an ethnocentric and militant Christian missionary zeal to the north, the Tausug conception of Islam grew naturally to emphasize the militancy of the holy war, or *jihād*, against the non-believers.

In this paper I propose to discuss the Tausug idea of *parrang sabbil*, the basic concept which sanctioned the holy war, especially in its later phases when it was institutionalized as a form of altruistic suicide. Group resistance against the Spanish prior to the middle of the 19th century was relatively well organized through the institutions of the sultanate. But with the Spanish conquest of the town of Jolo in 1876, responsibility for the *jihād* came increasingly to be a concern of the individual and local community, rather than the state. The institution of a personal *jihād*, called *juramentado* by the Spanish, was a form of

suicide in which a man went to a Christian settlement and ritually began to murder non-Moslems until he in turn was killed.

Prior to the establishment of Spanish hegemony over Luzon in the 16th century, the Tausug sultanate was the largest and most powerful political entity in the Philippines, embracing at least a quarter million persons in a multi-ethnic group state. Tausug pirates and slave raiders were the scourge of the Malaysian archipelago until the middle of the 19th century, and even today an occasional short raid is launched. In more peaceful moments they are dry rice farmers living in dispersed inland settlements and coastal towns. At the time I conducted my field research, from 1966 to 1968, the sultanate was only a ghostly reflection of its former self; the higher levels of the political system have been replaced today by Philippine electoral politics, although conducted by Westernized Tausug.<sup>1</sup> While the Tausug today are officially a part of the Philippine republic, commitment to the nation is very weak in the interior, and the government has only nominal control (Kiefer, 1968, 1969, 1970a).

The words *parrang sabbil* are borrowed from Malay (*perang sabil*), *parrang* (Malay *perang*) meaning "war" and *sabil* (short for Arabic *fi sabil Allāh*), "in the path of God". A person who dies in the path of God is considered a martyr (*shāhid*), and is entitled to the immediate rewards of heaven. In Sura iii 156 of the Koran: "If ye be slain or die on the path of God, then pardon from God and mercy is better than what ye have amassed." The concept is found in one form or another among most of the coastal Islamic peoples in insular Southeast Asia.

There were two basic forms of *parrang sabbil*. In the form of the juramentado proper, a single individual or small group of men would attack a Christian settlement or army post with the intention of killing and being killed. This form of *parrang sabbil* began in the middle of the nineteenth century with the establishment of a Spanish toehold on the island of Jolo, and continued through the American period. It has only occasionally occurred since the end of World War II. On the other hand, a second form of *parrang sabbil* is said to occur whenever a Tausug is innocently killed in battle with a non-Moslem, whether or not he has formally prepared for it. All Tausug killed in battle with the Spanish, Americans, or Filipinos were automatically *sabbil*. In the

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Spanish period this consisted of both large pitched battles between the Spanish forces and the Tausug, as well as numerous occasional skirmishes.

The orthodox interpretation of *jihad*, supported by almost all of the traditional Near Eastern jurists, is that *jihad* is a community rather than an individual obligation (Khadduri, 1955: 60). To make *jihad* an individual obligation would have brought it perilously close to obligatory suicide, which has always been strongly condemned in Islam. For the Tausug, on the other hand, the *parrang sabbil* tended, at least in the later period, to emphasize the character of deliberate suicide.

The history of *parrang sabbil* on Jolo may be divided into four phases. From the time of the first Spanish contacts in the sixteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century, the Spanish and the Tausug were more or less on an equal military footing, and organized warfare prevailed. But with the establishment of the Spanish garrison on Jolo in 1876 and the introduction of steam warships, the strength of the state declined, although the Tausug were still able to mount large offensive operations against the Spanish, as in the attack on the garrison in 1877 by two thousand men. During this period there was a considerable growth in the importance of individual acts of suicide.

The early American period (1899-1913) saw the cumulation of the mass *parrang sabbil* in the form of defensive *cota* warfare. A group of Tausug, including armed men as well as women and children, would gather together in a stone fort with walls about six feet high, some of which were built specifically for this purpose. A stockpile of food and water was brought in, and the group would await the inevitable massacre, sometimes sending out scouts to prod the soldiers into attack. Six hundred persons died in the battle of Mount Dahu in 1906 with the American army under General Wood. Many Tausug feigned death in the pile of corpses in order to obtain one last chance to hack an unsuspecting soldier. Seventy-five Tausug were killed in a *cota* in Taglibi on November 19, 1906. In 1913, over five thousand Tausug assembled in the crater of the extinct volcano of Mount Bagsak, although many had left at the time the battle began. Over three hundred Tausug were killed by the army under General Pershing. In all of these battles, there were few prisoners taken. In the words of General Wood: "They never surrendered. Our losses, if the troops are handled carefully, are usually very small. They are fanatics, and care nothing about being killed" (quoted in Roger 1959). Compared with the Americans, the Tausug were poorly armed at this time. Death was regarded as in-

evitable. Among the bodies at Mount Dahu, for example, the army found only forty-six rifles.

Throughout the later Spanish and American periods there was an increasing importance given to individual acts of *sabbil*. The task of defending the community of Islam was gradually removed from the sultan and concentrated in the hands of individual men and local communities. At present, there are no organized group attempts at *parrang sabbil*, although individuals who die in the normal course of fighting the Philippine constabulary are considered to be *sabbil*. Although the social conditions which gave rise to *parrang sabbil* during these four periods are quite different, the belief system and theodicy of the institutions has remained largely the same.

Nor was it exclusively anti-Christian, for it was occasionally performed against the Japanese during World War II, although more often merely against the Filipino soldiers who remained in the constabulary under the Japanese. The number of genuine juramentados seems to have been rather small, however, as a result of the Draconian Japanese policy of taking vengeance against the entire community from which the juramentado came.

In spite of the individual nature of many juramentados, the fact remains that it was never done against members of ethnic groups who were not considered military and religious enemies of the Tausug. Chinese, for example, in spite of their status as non-Moslems, were seldom molested. As one man put it, "There is no sense killing the Chinese; they are docile and take orders from whoever has the most power. In the war between Moslems and *kabil* (Kafirs) the Chinese are neutral." Nor was it done against the semi-nomadic Badjaw or so-called "sea gypsies" of Sulu, who the Tausug consider (incorrectly) to be non-Moslem. The same informant remarked that the Badjaw "are worthless people; killing them is just like killing monkeys." As far as I can tell, *parrang sabbil* as deliberate suicide was never done against the English, Dutch, French, or other Europeans who put into Sulu ports at various times during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, nor does it seem to have been done against the Spanish prior to the Spanish conquest of Jolo town.

During the later Spanish and early American period (1876 to 1913) the occurrence of individual juramentados was not random, but seemed to increase during certain definite periods. This was partially the result of fluctuations in the accommodation between Tausug power and the increasing European military power, but natural disasters seemed to

play a role as well. The rash of juramentados in 1903, for example, seems to have been partially the result of a rampant cholera epidemic in eastern Jolo, which the Tausug took as proof the Americans were poisoning their water.<sup>2</sup> They maintained that it was better to die in the path of God fighting the Americans, than die of cholera. Any deliberate attack on the sanctity of Islam was likely to lead to an outbreak of suicides. About ten years ago, four persons did the *parrang sabbil* in Luuk, after some Filipino soldiers chased an outlaw into a mosque.

*Parrang sabbil* was usually done against soldiers; it was more likely to be done against men than women, and was never done against children. If any Moslems were killed, it was said that the amount of religious merit was decreased or entirely eliminated.

It is necessary to make a few remarks on the relationship between *parrang sabbil* and the classic Malaysian pattern of "running *amok*." The so-called *amok* is usually described as a pattern of uncontrollable violent behavior directed randomly without apparent regard for the consequences. As such, it is usually regarded as an indication of psychological imbalance. It is rather curious that accounts of this phenomenon in greater Indonesia are more common in medical literature than ethnography. Even within the medical literature there are few documented cases, most of the later writers apparently fed off the meager data presented in the few articles published around the turn of the century. As far as I can tell, *amok* is a phenomenon which is recalled more often than observed, and as such was subject to all manner of fanciful distortion. I am convinced that a history of the mythology of *amok* would tell us more about Europeans than about Malaysians — note the speed with which the word was adopted into European languages in the late seventeenth century — but that is beyond the scope of this paper.

The *amok* mythology offered the Spanish a ready interpretation for the apparently strange behavior of juramentado conducted by the Moslems on their southern frontiers. With little understanding of the theology which gave sanction to *sabbil*, they commonly interpreted it as simple insanity of a particularly troublesome sort. The myth that the *sabbil* is an *amok* has tenaciously persisted in the Christian Philippines with a concern greater than the reality would warrant.

I do not deny that *amok* occasionally occurs in other parts of greater Malaysia, although it is apparently absent among the Tausug. I never

<sup>2</sup> Jolo Barracks: Post Letters, Book 3, page 172 (1903). Deposited in the collection of discontinued foreign military commands, United States National Archives, Washington, D.C.

witnessed or heard of a single case, although I made a special effort to collect instances from older informants. It is entirely likely, however, that in its classic form it occurs mainly among strangers in areas where they are cut off from kinsmen and friends — in towns and urban settings especially. If so, descriptions of the phenomenon would be rare in standard ethnographic accounts of small communities.

*Amok* is random and indiscriminate violent behavior, whereas *sabbil* is specifically goal-directed and freely chosen. While the *sabbil* may seem to have lost self-control during the act itself, the preparations leading to it are highly planned. Except for a few marginal cases, *parrang sabbil* cannot be described as a psychological malady, but rather as an act of altruistic suicide sanctioned by the deepest religious values of the society.

The preparatory rituals for a single individual act of *parrang sabbil* were quite complex, but basically were all extensions of the need to insure that the corpse of the *sabbil* would be properly prepared to enter the afterlife. Accordingly, all of the normal rituals for a corpse — or at least those which were feasible — were done for the suicide while he was still alive. Religious officials would bathe his body in the same manner as they would a corpse: three times facing east, three times facing west, and three times on his back. Dirt would be removed from the anus and other bodily orifices to insure complete ritual purity. The head would be shaven, eyebrows plucked, and fingernails neatly trimmed. Finally, the suicide would be dressed in a suit of shroud-like white clothing specially prepared for the occasion. As is common in other Moslem rituals, the state of purity created by these rituals could be immediately broken by contact with women, bodily elimination, or any other unclean act.

While not derived from the normal rituals for a corpse, one preparatory act is interesting as a reflection of the masochistic and quasi-sexual attitude which underlay much of the institution. The penis of the *sabbil* was bound tightly in an erect position to insure the success of the mission. While this might reasonably be interpreted as simply an instance of homeopathic magic (upright penis equals upright body) designed to insure that the *sabbil* does not fall too quickly, the potential implications go even deeper. For a man to be in a state of ritual purity and nevertheless have an upright penis — albeit a magical one — is quite incongruous with Moslem ritual practice. Why this should be so is a puzzle, but it may be a reflection of a theme I will pursue in more detail below: that the peculiar value of the institution

of *sabbil* for the Tausug is that it unites two otherwise disparate roles in their culture — the man of piety and the man of action.

It was necessary for the potential suicide to obtain permission from his immediate kinsmen, specifically his parents and siblings, as well as the community headman and the highest ranking religious leader in his mosque. Ideally, permission would also be obtained from the sultan although, in practice, this was not always possible. However, there were no sanctions against a person who did not ask permission.

The immediate motivations for the act were rather variable. By "motive" in this regard I mean nothing more than the typical justifications which a person would give to others or to himself in the process of rehearsing the act in his mind. Religious motives were uppermost in the public rhetoric associated with *parrang sabbil*: a man did it for the greater glory of God, the community, and his own soul. Nevertheless there were a number of more personal motives which often entered into decision, and which a man might only share with his close friends or kinsmen.

Sometimes a man would commit suicide out of spite against his parents, wife, or other kinsmen: a kind of "you will be sorry when I am dead" attitude. While spite is obviously a universal human sentiment, among the Tausug it is at least partially institutionalized. A man desiring to hurt those close to him, and whom he might otherwise attempt to kill if it were not for their closeness, might publicly announce his intentions to hurt them doing *pagjuruh* to them. Suicide in the form of *parrang sabbil* was a major form of *juruh*. I witnessed an instance in the community of Tubig Nangka in 1967. A young man, Aja, was secretly in love with a second cousin who was about to be engaged to another man in a distant community. As the boat taking the engagement party was about to leave, Aja fired his gun several times and announced to his kinsmen that he would not allow it to leave, and if they insisted he would do *juruh* to them by committing suicide against the Philippine Constabulary. After extensive negotiations lasting several weeks, Aja was eventually married to the girl.

A whole range of personal problems might be the immediate precipitating motive for committing suicide. If a person feels humiliated, or has been shamed and cannot take revenge in the normal manner, he may turn the anger against himself. Failure in love or financial affairs, or grief at the death of a child, are commonly given as reasons. While it was possible to commit suicide by simple self-destruction — throwing oneself against a sharpened spear, for example — I am struck by the



apparent rarity of this type of suicide. Very occasionally, a woman might disembowel herself for one reason or another, but simple self-destruction by men was almost nonexistent. I am tempted to give a simple theological explanation for this fact: by committing suicide through *jihad*, the death was not wasted and one at least was assured of religious merit. Yet on the other hand, the desire to die a flashy and spectacular death, exciting the imagination of all who hear about it, is characteristically Tausug in subtle ways which seem to go beyond simple religious necessity.

The important Tausug value in this regard is the enormous emphasis which is placed upon risk-taking and adventure in almost all aspects of life dominated by males. Tausug are stress-seekers, and the prudent among them lose the opportunity to demonstrate important values of character: bravery, daring, magnanimity and pity to inferiors, indifference to pain, fortitude, loyalty to comrades, and acceptance of fate without question. If a man must die by suicide, it is much typically Tausug to seek death through an adventure the course of which is far from completely certain, and in which the exact manner of death is fatefully in the hands of others, than it is to commit suicide at home in the quiet of the afternoon. All societies value the man who dies a "good death"; for the Tausug a good death should be framed as part of an adventure.

It is also possible that a number of individual suicides occurred because the individual had committed some heinous breach against Tausug customary law or Islamic law, such as incest or parricide, and was liable to be severely punished or even killed by the headman. Here again, the suicide voluntarily chose an honorable death with religious merit rather than an ignoble death at the hands of the law. Nevertheless, all my informants denied that it was ever possible for a headman, or even a sultan, to force a criminal to commit *sabbil* against his will.

The Spanish term *juramentado* apparently comes from an optional aspect of the *parrang sabbil* complex. Occasionally, a group of men who planned to do *sabbil* together would swear on the Holy Koran that they would not waver from this goal. For example, in 1968 the Philippine armed forces launched a minor military campaign in the region of eastern Jolo in which I was working. The army's goal was to apprehend a group of pirates — some of whom lived in my own community — who had launched a raid against a small town on Basilan Island. In the process of looking for this small group, however, they so terrified the region that a large group of armed men assembled on

the top of Mount Urof. I visited them as a mediator shortly after most of the group had sworn together that if the soldiers attacked they would die together in *parrang sabbil*. On this occasion, fortunately, the government decided not to attack.

Part of the preparation for an individual *parrang sabbil* included the performance of long epic ballads (*langkit parrang sabbil*<sup>3</sup>) glorifying the exploits of those who had fought the Europeans in the past. Almost every noteworthy suicide was the subject of a ballad. These songs were composed and performed by professional singers, and the words were usually written in Jawi script, thus insuring a fair degree of historical accuracy. Much of the data for this paper was derived from a close analysis of these texts.

It may be useful to examine in detail a few key examples of *parrang sabbil* which are recounted in traditional epic poems. These poems reveal not only the details of specific historical occurrences, but also convey a sense of the style and ethos which animates the whole *parrang sabbil* complex. The events leading up to the *parrang sabbil* of Panglima Hassan took place in late 1903 to 1904. According to the Tausug version, Panglima Hassan, an influential regional headman, was extremely upset that a lesser headman who was one of his supporters in the quasi-feudal political structure, was manhandled by the Americans because he would not pay his residence tax. At this time the sultan was nominally supporting the Americans on the taxation issue, and sent one of his own supporters to try to convince Hassan to cooperate. But Hassan vehemently objected on the grounds that to give even two pesos to the Kafirs was tantamount to embracing their religion. It is clear from the context of the poem that the tax was interpreted as comparable to a religious tithe. The sultan undoubtedly had pressing political reasons of his own at this time to oppose Hassan, and suggested that the Americans attack. An operation was launched which lasted seven months, including several *cota* battles in which hundreds of Tausug were killed, and ended when Hassan and a small party were killed at the crater of Mount Bagsak.

Another popular ballad describes the plight of five young Tausug men who refused to be inducted as trainees into the militia sometime between 1936 and 1941. They roamed around committing robbery and cattle theft, finally killing a bus driver who had reported them. Even-

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<sup>3</sup> A complete example of one of these ballads, including Tausug and English texts, is contained in Kiefer, 1970b.

tually they and several of their kinsmen were killed in a battle with the army, which lasted "three weeks without end", according to the singer, perhaps exaggerating their prowess. Throughout the text they are described with the usual heroic superlatives: brave, strong-willed, tough, clever, handsome, and the like. In many instances of *parrang sabbil* of this type, it is difficult to determine if the group originally planned to commit suicide when they first began to resist the government. Quite commonly a man will become an outlaw and decide to commit *parrang sabbil* only when his military position becomes otherwise untenable. For a variety of reasons, including distrust of the government and a justified fear of Philippine jails, as well as a preference for death rather than the dishonor of capture by the government, Tausug very rarely surrender. The idea of *parrang sabbil* then serves as a means of putting this resistance, and the inevitable death which will result, in a more meaningful context.

This is well illustrated in the story of the *parrang sabbil* of Baddun, who died sometime during the Japanese period. Baddun was insulted by an arrogant Tausug aristocrat, or *datu*, and killed him in revenge. Blood money was accepted by the murdered man's kinsmen, thus settling the matter in Tausug customary law. But one of Baddun's companions maintained, in a very typically Tausug manner, that since they were still liable to the Philippine government for the murder under Philippine law, they might as well compound the charges by becoming complete outlaws: "If we are going to be bad, let's be really bad." They committed robberies, attacked army patrols, and eventually reached a point where a formal *parrang sabbil* was the only course open to them. Baddun led his men on a suicidal frontal attack on a large army column.

### *The Eschatology of Parrang Sabbil*

In spite of variability in the social and political circumstances which prompted *parrang sabbil*, and the changing forms in which it is expressed, the belief system which underlies it has not undergone major change. It will be necessary to briefly sketch the key Tausug ideas involving death and the afterlife.

The moral foundation of Tausug eschatological ideas, as in Islam generally, lies in the distinction between good deeds and bad deeds. There are said to be two sets of angels who keep records of man's proper and improper conduct and who enter these in a cosmic record book to be opened at the Day of Judgment. Good deeds include not

only the range of normal moral obligations — kindness, pity, good will, and so forth — but also the usual Moslem ritual obligations: prayer, tithes, almsgiving, pilgrimage, and a host of other minor obligations. Bad deeds include not only the usual human crimes such as murder, incest, theft, or rape, but also purely ritual sins such as eating pork, blasphemy, and failure to wash properly after elimination.

The Tausug approach to death and the afterlife revolves around the concept of religious merit and its acquisition by man through the accumulation of good deeds and regular performance of ritual obligations. Religious merit has both an active and a passive dimension. As the result of man's active striving to acquire merit, it is called *karayawan*, literally "goodness". As a gift of God to man according to principles which only He can ultimately understand, it is called *pahala* (the passive dimension). In addition, *karayawan* in this context also implies a state of pleasure and happiness in the afterlife. Many of my informants explained the idea to me by describing heaven as analogous to a state of perpetual sexual orgasm. But the amount of *karayawan* one receives in heaven is directly proportional to the amount of *pahala* one has been given by God in return for good deeds.

One of the major differences between Tausug folk Islam and the stricter Islam taught by the Egyptian religious teachers in Jolo concerns the transference of religious merit from one individual to another. According to the Tausug, if one man is innocently killed or otherwise victimized by another, the accumulated religious merit of the killer is transferred to the victim, while the accumulated bad deeds of the victim are transferred to the killer. The uneven exchange of life is balanced by a compensating exchange of religious status in the afterlife; reciprocity in this world is balanced by a complementary reciprocity in the other world. Most Tausug fighters believe that if they die in battle they will be automatically "inside of *karayawan*". These ideas are opposed by the foreign teachers, but given the great emphasis which Tausug place upon reciprocity and exchange in all aspects of their life, it is understandable that they are applied to religion as well.

A curious feature of the eschatological complex involves the idea that the soul of the slain non-believer accompanies the *sabbil* to heaven — albeit as his servant — and partakes of the glory of paradise. In one sense the killing of the non-believer is a favor done to him, for he is spared the punishments of hell. To understand the origin and meaning of this belief it is necessary to look at the eschatological beliefs which surround

a killing in which one Tausug kills another as part of the patterns of feuding which are endemic on Jolo. Rural Tausug believe that to kill a man is both a sin against God as well as a crime against man. However, if the blood debt which is created by the killing is repaid by a counter-killing by the victim's kinsmen and allies, no punishment in the afterworld will occur. The killer has paid for his crime with his own death, and the matter is of no further concern to God. We are assuming that the original victim was innocently killed, or "victimized" (*kiya-laugan*), as the Tausug would say. The afterworld is specifically viewed as a state of affairs which evens up the unpaid and unbalanced reciprocity of the mundane world.

It is clear that this same idea is applied to the fate of the slain non-believer's soul. He has paid for his evil in this world by the very act of being slain by the *sabbil*, and is entitled to at least some participation in paradise. On the other hand, the fate of the non-believer who killed the *sabbil* is rather different. Here we encounter another form of reciprocity, for the non-believer receives the residue of the *sabbil*'s bad deeds, and thus is assured of hell.

Unlike normal persons, who are said to go to hell for an indeterminate time to "burn away the evil" before being reunited with their respective souls in heaven, the bodies and souls of the *sabbil* go directly to heaven, riding a horse with a green mane. The basic theme of *sabbil* is "I will die, therefore I will not die." In Sura iii 166: "Consider not those slain on God's path to be dead, nay, alive with God; they are cared for." This attitude is fundamentally irrational, but the overriding problem of an eschatology engendered by it is to resolve the paradox in a meaningful way.

I mentioned above that we are presented with the apparent problem that random individual acts of ritual suicide were directed only against military antagonists of the Tausug state. Before I understood the theology of the institution I was puzzled by the lack of any nexus which would connect the goals of an organized state on the one hand with the private feeling states of individuals on the other. Such a nexus is easily recognizable, however, in two syllogisms which are implicit in the idea of *parrang sabbil*:

Those who attack the sanctity of Islam are evil  
 The Tausug are Moslems  
 The Spanish are attacking the Tausug  
 Therefore: the Spanish are evil

To be innocently killed is meritorious  
 A person is innocent if attacked by an evil person  
 Therefore: to be killed by the Spanish is meritorious

In the early American period it was easy enough to substitute Americans for Spanish in this logic. Yet as Americans gradually came to be more favorably regarded, *sabbil* was applied only against Christian Filipinos. As Filipinos came to be seen more favorably, it was further restricted to Filipino members of the armed forces. At present only members of the Philippine Constabulary are considered sufficiently evil to meet the requirements of the logic. To be innocently killed in battle against the Constabulary — and everyone considers himself innocent — makes one *sabbil*, even if the death was not deliberately sought.

The problem of why Americans came to be so favorably regarded compared with the Filipino mercenaries has puzzled me. Certainly American colonial motives in the Philippines were a shade "purer" than those of the British or Germans of the same period. In particular, there were no economic interests in Sulu. Yet hundreds of Tausug were massacred during the early battles, and the Army was not above using religious terror. Pershing apparently had prisoners interrogated by suspending them by the heels over a pit filled with the carcass of a dead pig, into which they were gradually lowered.

The reasons for the radical shift in attitude toward Americans are difficult to reconstruct because the memory of informants is so heavily biased by the positive experiences with Americans during and immediately after World War II. Yet the change in attitude apparently occurred before the war, and I can only speculate as to the reasons.

In the first place, the immediate precipitating cause of many of the early battles revolved around Tausug refusal to surrender firearms, brand their cattle, allow their land to be surveyed, or pay the residence tax to the Philippine government. To do any of these things, they said, would in some mystical sense instantly turn them into non-believers. Consequently, any attempt to force compliance was interpreted as an attack on the sanctity of Islam. After the initial defeats, the residence tax gradually came to be seen in less religious terms, although the belief died very hard indeed and there are some remnants of it still today. As late as ten years ago there were still older men who refused to walk on the government road for fear of becoming a non-believer.

In the second place, after the final defeat in 1913, contact with Americans was increasingly restricted to high level government officials,

supervising teachers, and military officers. The bulk of the enlisted men were Filipinos, who could easily learn to speak Tausug and often shared many other features of culture. For example, both Tausug and Filipinos are heavily concerned with the themes of shame and honor, and both are prone to engage in violence at offences to their sense of self. This similarity may have aggravated the conflict, because it led the Tausug to magnify the major point of difference between them: religion. American culture and behavior, on the other hand, was so far removed from Tausug experience that they could approach Americans as a totally different category of person. To make sense out of their experience with the Americans, they developed a curious adaptation of their theodicy. To the question, "Why does God permit these infidels to conquer us", the answer they gave was that sometime in the past God gave both the Tausug and the Americans a choice whether they wanted paradise on this earth or paradise in the afterworld. The Americans naturally chose paradise in this world, and the Tausug paradise in the afterworld. This was the basis of a perfect working misunderstanding, although the Filipinos were left in limbo. While American officers cultivated a *noblesse oblige* and a reputation for bravery and fair impartiality, the Filipino functionaries actually ran the day-to-day affairs and took the brunt of Tausug wrath.

Another important difference between Tausug perception of Spanish and Americans concerned the missionary aspirations of the Spanish. As one older informant put it, "We fought the Spanish so hard because they wanted to impose their law and religion on us. They would convert us to be Kafirs, and we would rather die than accept that. When the Americans came they did not try to force their religion on us."

Another important theme in Tausug culture which receives an important expression in the idea of *parrang sabbil* is what I might call the theme of constantly expanding evil: once a person sets himself on a track of doing "bad deeds" he will continue to compound his evil actions until he is either killed on the one hand, or repents and radically switches into a more pious life on the other. Tausug throw themselves into evil with a robust enthusiasm, and later regret their conduct with just as much enthusiasm. In a sense, there is a tendency to carry both other-worldly religious piety, and violent activity in this world, to their maximum extremes.

Like many societies influenced by Islam, the Tausug distinguish very clearly between the religious life of piety and saintliness on the one hand and the life of action in the world on the other. The saint and

the man of violent action are two apparently contradictory ideal roles valued greatly by the Tausug.

The wider significance of this pattern in Islam is underscored by I. M. Lewis in his study of the Islamic Somali of East Africa. He writes in terms which are equally applicable to the Tausug:

"There is then [among the Tausug] a general division between secular and spiritual power in thought and in social relationships. In terms of ideal social roles, [Tausug] distinguish between the spiritual power of men of God and the secular power of warriors. This in turn is part of a wider dichotomy between strength conceived of and defined in terms of physical force, and divine power . . . Spiritual blessing is thus not directly associated with secular power, but viewed rather as its complementary opposite (Lewis, 1963)."

The separation of these two role-ideals appears in the Tausug culture at every turn. Young men typically fit into the action complex, older men into the piety complex. A young man who is currently engaged in "bad" activities like piracy or feuding may choose not to engage in regular prayers; it is not considered appropriate to mix good and bad activities at the same time. It is occasionally said that young people should avoid accumulating too much religious merit — there will be plenty of time later — so that God will not take their souls too soon.

The Tausug have accepted a religion which is impossible to apply perfectly in everyday life, not only because the gap between ideal and practice in Islam is particularly wide, but also because the realities of Tausug social organization and its segmentary political structure with competing centers of power within the state make the ideal of a centralized administration of the *shari'a* little more than a wistful ideal. To operate effectively in the world requires the use of violence against fellow Moslems in spite of the recognition that such violence is condemned. The headman of the community where I did my research was constantly complaining that his role as political leader made it necessary to do things which were ruining his chances for a pleasant afterlife; headmen are said to spend a longer time in hell than ordinary persons.

The appeal and significance of *parrang sabbil* to the Tausug is precisely that it combines in a single institution both these different role ideals. In situations where Islam is seen as menaced by an external threat — and this has included most of Tausug history since they became Moslems — the religious power of men of God may acquire a wider political significance which it might not otherwise have. And conversely, the virtues of the man of violent action — bravery, fortitude,



willingness to die, and all the rest — may acquire a religious meaning which might otherwise be condemned. To die in the path of God is the perfect form of altruistic behavior to the Tausug because it combines two otherwise contradictory values in a higher synthesis.

*Brown University, Providence, R.I., U.S.A.*

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